

Two Years of the NDP

If in the future it might be considered possible or advisable for what is now known as the LSA to take on the character of a broader left formation, a centrist organization, it would still be essential to have a cadre organization of the character necessary to lead the struggle of the working class to socialist victory on a continent dominated by the most ruthless and powerful capitalist class on the entire globe. The LSA is the cadre organization recruited on the full program, democratic centralist, oriented to the NDP, which is a labor party formation based on the unions through which it would seem certain in the whole next period the maturing of the Canadian working class is going to take place. Two years have passed — two years of the LSA experience — a test of our orientation, its correctness and our capacity to implement it — and two years of the NDP — the milieu of the LSA operations. The two years of the NDP are the decisive factor for, for our small forces the NDP is the objective factor.

Since its foundation the NDP as a reformist political party in a parliamentary democracy, seeking political office, has undergone two important tests — two federal elections. The high hopes and anticipation demonstrated by the delegates in the founding convention have failed to materialize. The party has made no real gain over the old CCF vote. Only in three provinces, Ontario, Saskatchewan and British Columbia does the NDP have any substantial base of support. Next provincial election in Saskatchewan where the NDP holds government office will probably see its defeat. In B.C. the party, after many years as official opposition, appears to be stalemated. It is doubtful if the coming election in Ontario will see any substantial growth. It will probably register a further decline.

The leadership of the party has succeeded in shaping the constituency organizations into mere electoral machines almost completely under their domination. Union political education committees, under the old CCF often centers for anti-brass and leftist activity, are now directed almost entirely towards the constituency organizations.

There is no real political life in the movement. The atmosphere is conservative, sterile. The CCF constituency organizations even in their latter days retained certain elements of critical thought and even class consciousness. The NDP clubs were conceived and have been raised in an atmosphere of conformity, hostility to class concepts, to public ownership, to internationalism.

The leftists in the NDP are largely persons who made the switch from the CCF to the NDP. They have been pretty well worked over, have little fight and carry on largely from inertia, from force of habit. They do not reflect any genuine, any native currents in the movement that have risen on the basis of experiences of the movement and the class. There are no such currents in the NDP at this stage that hold any extensive possibilities for the left. The organization of the party did not reflect a significant rising consciousness in the ranks of the workers and poor farmers. The party is a creation of the trade union bureaucracy and the old CCF hierarchy, in reaction to the anti-labor drive signaled by the (*right-wing*) Social Credit government in B.C. and the Smallwood Liberal government in Newfoundland, and the smashing Tory victory of 1958. They do not view the NDP as an instrument for social change but an instrument to pull the state out of the grasp of capital, to neutralize it, or at best make it amenable to their concepts of labor-management collaboration.

The NDP has no dynamic, no great purpose. It is weighed down with the sense of responsibility to the office for which it hungers.

In such circumstances it has not been possible to establish the LSA as the left wing, as the socialist caucus in the NDP. It has not been possible to integrate its forces in the NDP. There have been no currents that could give it cover, protect it from (...*text ends* –*Ed.*)